

## Characters

- Bill
- Sue

## Act

*( SCENE: Bare, Open Stage. As much room as possible in all directions. A scrim covering entire upstage wall which can be back-lit. The stage starts out in total darkness. Music begins in the darkness, slowly building in intensity. As the music swells, an apricot sunset slowly emerges on the scrim. As the light from the sunset reaches its mid-point, PECOS BILL appears from the upleft corner pulling a giant catfish on a rope. His costume is a tall, ten gallon cowboy hat, a black leather vest with silver conchos, red cowboy shirt, green bandana around his neck, black and white pony skin chaps, cowboy boots and silver spurs, two six shooters on his waist, brown fringed gloves. PECOS is short. Lying on her back, on top of the catfish, is his wife, SLUE-FOOT SUE. Her costume is a white wedding gown, a rose in her hair and bare feet. She is dead but sings anyway. PECOS slowly drags the catfish toward center stage. All the words are sung.*

BILL

Oh why, on such a day as this  
My darlin Slue Foot Sue  
Did you force me wild and foolishly  
To be the cause of buryin you  
SUE

It was my fate you saw me there  
Ridin high on the Rio Grande  
Atop some slimey catfish back  
You were callin for my hand

BILL

I was blinded by the sight of you  
No such a woman did exist  
I'd never seen the like of it  
Ridin high on some big old fish  
SUE

But that was just the half of it  
For to marry was our demise  
If it hadn't been for takin oaths  
I'd be watchin that big sunrise

BILL

But wasn't it me  
Who taught the bronco how to buck  
SUE

And wasn't it you  
Who roped tornados by the neck

BILL

And wasn't it me  
Who dug the mighty Rio Grande  
SUE

All by hand

BOTH

All by hand

Then why is we both dyin  
On this land  
Why is we forsaken  
Lost and shamed, forgotten  
Why is we both rotten  
In the memories of man  
In the memories of man  
In the memories of man  
BILL  
It was my mistake, I must admit  
To introduce you to my horse  
But I had heard such high acclaim  
Of your horsemanship, of course  
SUE  
You coulda warned me first-handedly  
Of the nature of your beast  
I had no idea he was a killin bronc  
Til he threw me sixty feet  
BILL  
You flew so high you cracked the sky  
And was forced to duck the moon  
I was mighty impressed but on the thirteenth time  
I was singin a different tune  
SUE  
I was way high above, watchin you below  
All the earth was a tiny speck  
I was prayin for my second wind  
I was prayin to save my neck  
BILL  
But wasn't it me  
Who whipped the rattlesnake to death  
SUE  
Wasn't it you  
Who invented the centipede  
BILL  
Wasn't it me  
Who dug the mighty Rio Grande  
SUE  
All by hand  
BOTH  
All by hand  
Then why is we both dyin  
On this land  
Why is we forsaken  
Lost and shamed, forgotten  
Why is we both rotten  
In the memories of man  
In the memories of man  
In the memories of man  
BILL  
It was three whole days

And four whole nights  
And you were bouncin further still  
Out beyond the Milky Way  
But that bronc ain't had his fill  
SUE  
You called him "Widow Maker"  
But the reverse was comin true  
If I called him anything myself  
I'd a called the same to you  
BILL  
I was fadin fast inside my chest  
My poor head was all on fire  
I could not think but what to do  
So I pulled out that cold blue iron  
SUE  
You drew that gun way down below  
And I knew what you had in mind  
To fire upon your dear sweet wife  
Who was helplessly resigned  
BOTH  
Who was helplessly resigned to fate  
To die a hero's death  
It's the stuff that makes a legend great  
But the pain's still on our breath  
But the pain's still on our breath  
But the pain's still on our breath  
BILL  
I fired and fired like a devil-dog  
Shootin wildly in the sky  
And I saw my dear sweet Sue crash down  
Landin square on her naked eye  
SUE  
I was dead long before I hit the ground  
And I felt the stars like wind  
And I counted all my happy days  
On the back of a catfish fin  
BILL  
I could not let you buck like that  
Forever up and down  
For what's a married man to do  
Whose bride flies the day she's found  
SUE  
I ain't blamin you my darlin Bill  
It was in the hands of time  
To have me die a mortal's death  
And to die in a hero's prime  
BILL  
But it's me, ain't it me  
Who was so widely acclaimed  
SUE  
It's you, it was you

Who was brave and true  
BILL  
It's me, ain't it me  
Who was so widely famed  
SUE  
And proclaimed throughout the land  
BILL  
It was me, it was me  
Who dug the mighty Rio Grande  
SUE  
And raised by the wild coyote  
BILL  
It was me, wasn't it me  
Who tamed the twisted hurricane  
SUE  
And he did it all by hand  
And he did it all by hand  
BOTH  
Then why is we both dyin  
On this land  
Why is we forsaken  
Lost and shamed, forgotten  
Why is we both rotten  
In the memories of man  
In the memories of man  
In the memories of man  
BILL  
Now you're dead and you're gone  
And I'm just passin on  
I can feel the cold sting of my guilt  
I look for a place to bury you, sweet  
But I'm buried as sure as you're kilt  
SUE  
Don't languish sweet Bill  
It's a poisonous pill  
What's done is all done and it's through  
Your crime was invented by lies of the mind  
It's a crime when a lie is so true  
BILL  
But I was fathered by liars  
And my offspring was too  
Oh how can I ever escape it  
To be born as a legend and die as a man  
It's painful to even relate it —  
SUE  
Be kind on yourself  
You won't last forever  
And the moon could care less what you do  
But don't forget *me* on the day that you saw me  
And how I was capturing you  
BILL

But aren't I a hero  
Above all that stuff  
How could I just fall by the wayside  
I'm fixed in the prairies and valleys below me  
I'm fixed until heavens collide  
SUE

You're vanishing Billy  
Just look at your breath  
Do you see it make ripples in space  
You're gone with the wind like others before  
you  
Not even leavin a trace  
Not even leavin a trace

BILL  
But I'm bigger than mountains  
I'm bigger than time  
I'm written in history pages  
They'll find me in writing in two thousand  
years  
They'll find me all down through the ages.

SUE  
I'm glad that I'm dead  
And never returning  
I'm glad that I'm not in your shoes  
There's nothing can touch me or bring me to  
mourning  
For something as hopeless as you

BILL  
Don't leave me behind  
Without a prayer or a rhyme  
I'm too young to go down like a dog  
I've walked on hot coals and I've branded  
the mountains  
I can't just vanish like the fog

SUE  
Good-bye darlin Billy  
This land is too lonesome  
For someone who's bigger than life  
I'm no hero, God knows, and I never aspired  
I was happy just being your wife

BILL  
But aren't I the one  
Who was King Killer Cowboy

SUE  
And weren't you the King of the Plains

BILL  
And aren't I the one  
Who strangled tornados

SUE  
And twisted them into the rains  
BILL

And aren't I the one  
Who dug out the Badlands  
SUE  
And taught the wild bronc how to buck  
BILL  
And didn't I dig out  
The whole damn Rio Grande  
SUE  
And you did it all by hand  
BOTH  
And we did it all by hand  
Then why is we both dyin on this land  
SUE  
Why is we forsaken  
BILL  
Lost and shamed, forgotten  
BOTH  
Why is we both rotten  
In the memories of man  
In the memories of man  
In the memories of man  
BILL  
And now I'm alone  
On the desolate plains  
Alone and drifting in space  
My legend and time and my myth is forgot  
So now you can look in my face  
You can look in my eyeballs  
Way back in my skull  
You can wonder at all that I did  
You can wonder at all of us miracle men  
But a giant is only a kid  
So while you go shopping  
And watching TV  
You can ponder my vanishing shape  
You can build your own mountains and tear  
Them all down  
But from death you can't escape  
From death you can't never escape  
  
END